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ABSTRACT

This tutoring guide contains eight short sections of instruction for tutors working with adult basic education students in Alberta, Canada. Each section, introduced by a question, contains tips for beginning tutoring and working with adult students in literacy education classes. The sections cover the following topics: (1) What is the problem?; (2) Who is this student?; (3) How do I start?; (4) What methods may I use?; (5) How do I set up goals?; (6) What are the "be" and "don't" rules?; (7) Things to know and remember?; and (8) What help can I get? A short additional information sheet contains the English word pyramid and lists the 20 most useful words in English and the 50 words most often used in writing letters and in reading. (KC)

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Everything You Need to Survive Tutoring

BOW CORRIDOR ADULT LITERACY PROJECT

FUNDED BY Wild Rose FOUNDATION
An Alberta Government Foundation

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

WHO IS THIS STUDENT?

HOW DO I START?

WHAT METHODS MAY I USE?

HOW DO I "SET UP" GOALS?

WHAT ARE THE "BE" & "DON'T" RULES?

THINGS TO KNOW AND REMEMBER?

WHAT HELP CAN I GET?

ED 386 536

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INTRODUCTION

The Bow Corridor Adult Literacy Project has developed a program to help those citizens who have difficulty with reading communicating in English.

If you have a few hours a week, or even an hour a week that you could volunteer to work with a student on a one-to-one basis, plea read on.

If you have:

- an ability to read
- a belief that adults can learn
- enthusiasm
- a willingness to accept others as they are
- a willingness to learn
- empathy with others
- patience
- a desire to help others

Then: You can help in our volunteer program. By volunteering, you will:

- provide a student with invaluable personal attention and instruction.
- let students know there are persons in the community who care enough to contribute as volunteers.

Are you willing to:

- Work at least 2 hours per week?
- commit to the program for at least 6 weeks?
- notify the student prior to necessary absence ?
- attend a tutor training workshop ?

If you decide tutoring is for you, you will be glad to know that you will be given help and guidance all along the way in working with t student assigned to you.

It is important, however, that each student have the "special" person in their lives to help them. That person can be you if you hav the time and patience to help.

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Functional illiteracy is the inability to read, write and compute well enough to perform the basic tasks of daily life.

According to Statistics Canada (1990), 16% of Canadian adults have reading skills "too limited to allow them to deal with the majority of written material encountered in everyday life." Another 22% can't cope with complex instructions.

Illiteracy is both a cause and a consequence of poverty and under-development.

In all regions of the world the rate of illiteracy is higher among women than men, yet there is a saying "educate a mother and you can educate a family". Unfortunately, it is also true that if you neglect the education of the mother, the education of the children suffers.

The Canadian high-school drop-out rate is 30%, one of the highest in the industrial world. The high-school drop-out rate for children from poor families is more than twice that of children from non-poor families. Sweden's drop-out rate has fallen in five years from 25% to 15%.

Of Canadian students who do complete high-school 15% are functional illiterates. Such adults are at a loss in an increasingly information-based society. It is estimated that 40% of the new jobs created by the year 2000 will be highly skilled versus 24% in 1990.

The problem of illiteracy costs businesses approximately $4.2 billion a year - $1.6 billion from industrial accidents, $2.6 billion in lost productivity.

Enemies of literacy - poverty, unemployment, poor health and housing, lack of child care, dysfunctional families, sexism, racism.

WHO IS THIS STUDENT?

Check these common characteristics:

1. Lack of Self-confidence: The adult who lacks reading skills: may feel very insecure and embarrassed...will try to hide his reading problem by turning down job advancement opportunities...will often ask others to read or write for him.

2. Fear of School: This fear, which sometimes cannot be overcome, stems from the student's past unpleasant experiences: promotions to next grade because of physical of physcial size rather than ability...ridicule by teachers or classmates because he/she is slower than the rest...rejection by classmates because of inferior clothing or inability to attend regularl...repeated failures on tests.

3. Feelings of Helplessness: When a student doubts his/her inability to learn, the thinking process is blocked or retarded, and feelings of anxiety and helplessness result. Some signs of helpless feelings in students are: hostility expressed toward subject matter...persistent bewilderment or blocking in spite of several explanations...lack of participation and attention...feelings of isolation: "no one cares." "..." I can't do anything" attitude... extreme shame concerning failures... procrastination or "forgetting"... inability to start or continue work alone.

4. Weak Motivation: Under-educated adults, because of a life history of failure to achieve recognized standards of success: may appear to lack motivation...may exhibit an attitude of almost complete resignation...may have poor dietary habits and thus tire easily and be less alert.

5. Unusual Sensitivity to Non-verbal Forms of Communication: With limited verbal skills, many under-educated adults: are extremely sensitive to tone of voice, facial expressions, "body language" and other non-verbal clues...tend to judge more by actions than words...feel resentful if they think that teachers are talking down to them.

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6. Use of Defense Mechanisms: The higher the degree of illiteracy in an adult, the more likely he/she is to attempt to hide his/her under-education from friends and even from the teacher, by the use of the following defense mechanisms: carrying a book or newspaper---carrying pencils in a conspicuous place---not having eyeglasses when asked to read---citing an "injury" to the writing hand when asked for a written response---exhibiting extremely well developed verbal expression and vocabulary.

7. Tendency to Lose Interest: Under-educated adults, just like average adults students, will leave a classroom situation which does not fulfill their needs, psychological as well as academic. When signs of apathy appear, it is time for the teacher to muster all possible teaching skill, understanding, and imagination to recapture the student's interest. The teacher must remember also that the student may not perform class tasks as rapidly as younger students; however, they can learn as well or better.

8. Potential: Adults who cannot read and write and yet are able to cope in a society made up of people who live by these skills often exhibit a great deal of intelligence and common sense. Many of them hold jobs and bring up their families and seem to be sucessful. However, it is also true that many have low academic aptitude or learning disabilities. Give students confidence in their ability to learn.

9. English as a Second Language (E.S.L.): The majority of learners in the Bow Corridor Adult Literacy Project are new Canadians with varying degrees of literacy in their own language.

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HOW DO I START?

First, let's define the term "functional illiteracy." This relates to the inability of an individual to use reading, writing, and computational skills in every day life situations. For example, a functionally illiterate adult is unable to fill out an application, read a medicine bottle, read a newspaper, locate a telephone number in a directory, use a bus schedule or do quality comparison shopping. In short, when confronted with printed materials, such people cannot function effectively.

After the initial "matching up" of tutor to student, comes the big day of the first meeting. You will, prior to this first meeting, have read the characteristics of the under-educated adult, along with the do's and don'ts of the tutor.

It's now time to get acquainted. The following questions may be helpful in eliciting the student's personal needs and arriving at both short and long term goals. Explain that discussing questions will help him/her reach personal goals. We do not recommend that all of these questions be asked. The cue should come from the student. Personal goals will often surface through this initial counselling session but reassessment and refinement of goals will be a continual process throughout instruction.

1. What caused you to come for reading help now?
   Why do you feel a need to learn to read or improve your reading at the present time?
   (Why now? This may be your primary motivation).
2. What is the first thing you would choose to learn to read?
   (If you could learn to read today, what would be the first thing you read?
3. What things would you like to be able to read?
4. In what ways would learning to read help you to get a job/get a better job/improve your performance on the job?

5. Can you tell me of a particular situation in which you have been embarrassed or in trouble because of your reading problem?
6. What do you like to do in your spare time?
7. What do you do best? What special talents or abilities do you possess?

If these questions fail to elicit the desired responses, be more specific as in the following suggestions:
(Be careful not to lead the student into a particular answer. You are attempting to jar the memory or get him/her thinking about specific personal problems. For instance, it may be better to say, "Do you need to learn more about doctors and medication?" Rather than, "Would you like to learn to read labels on medicine bottles?")

8. Do you feel the need to learn more about any of the following subjects?

a. income taxes
b. newspaper advertising
c. employment opportunities
d. reading utility bills
e. car maintenance
f. the court system
g. pre-natal care
h. legal problems
i. using a road map
j. labor unions
k. using the telephone
L. job applications
m. voting
n. reading the Bible
o. child care
p. time payments, credit cards, interest
q. getting a driver's license
r. birth control information
s. helping children with school work
t. health care/preventative medicine
u. using a checking account

Though you want to find out as much about your students as possible, they may be reluctant to talk about their past or personal life until you get to know one another better. Talking about the future and planning what you will work on together will ensure that you are not probing too much about their past. Goal-setting activities provide a means for talking with students without getting too personal about their backgrounds. Remember -- "The first impression is a lasting one" is an old adage that is verifiable through our experiences. The first contact a student has in the program commands such importance that it can't be over-exaggerated. THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF THE FIRST VISIT IS TO MEET A SECOND TIME!

For ending the first day on a positive note, send that student home from that first meeting feeling good about himself.

WHAT METHODS MAY I USE?

There are many different methods to be used in teaching reading. In the close, interpersonal relationship as in the one-to-one, no one method or "pat" answer dominates. Any successful method, however, is likely to be built upon mutual respect and trust. The first method we will discuss is the "whole word" reading method, or "sight reading" method.

A sight word is a word that is recognized instantly. It is recognized as a whole -- not broken down into its letter parts. I would recommend picking out a book at the student's reading level and writing words on separate note cards. It might be helpful to write on the back of the card a sentence using each word. He might like to take these cards home to study.

It is best to avoid teaching sight words which are similar in appearance on the same day. The number of words to teach in a lesson depends upon the individual student. It is probably best not to exceed six words in a given lesson, especially with students in the initial stages of reading instruction. Always avoid frustration levels.

The second method we would recommend is the "Language Experience." This method utilizes the student's own language.

There are six basic steps to follow:

1. Initiate conversation.
2. Record student's exact words, making a carbon copy.
3. Read story and point to each word as you read.
4. Provide a reason for student to read it back to you - one sentence at a time if necessary.
5. Select (with student) specific words to be learned.
6. Make word cards to practice new words.

There are several good reasons to try this method:

1. It is flexible and can be used with students at varying levels of ability. It can even be adapted for use with a group.
2. It is often successful with adults who have a history of negative school experiences. This method may bypass the "learning blocks" associated with tradtional textbooks and materials.
3. It teaches the student that written words can have personal meaning; it makes an immediate connection between the spoken and the written word.
4. It builds feelings of pride and confidence as the student sees his own speech preserved in writing.

The four basic language experience methods are:

1. Dictation Method: The teacher prints the student's exact words as he speaks (without correcting grammar.) Materials needed: Lined paper, carbon paper, pen or pencil, not cards (for word cards.)

2. Transcription: The student speaks into a tape recorder. The teacher transcribes the story later (perhaps typing it.) This works well with a group of students. Materials needed: Paper, carbon paper, tape recorder, note cards, pen or pencil, typewriter (optional).

3. Directed Writing: The teacher asks a question or begins a sentence and the student asnswers or finishes the sentence. The teacher writes the sentence or sentences. Materials needed: Paper, carbon paper, pen or pencil, note cards.

4. Free Writing: The student writes his own story (with the teacher's help.) This works best with more advanced students. Materials: Paper, carbon paper, tape recorder, pen or pendil, note cards.

The third method is the Neurological-Impress Method or Echo Method. The echo method is a technique which involves the student's visual (sight), aural (hearing), oral (speech), and tactile (touch) abilities in the process of learning to read. The student is seated slightly in front of the teacher so that the teacher's voice is close to the student's ear. From the very first session, the instructor and student read the same material out loud together. It is generally advisable in the beginning sessions for the instructor to read a little louder and slightly faster than the student. In the initial sessions, the paragraphs or sentences are repeated several times until a normal, fluid reading pattern is established. In most cases, two or three minutes of repetitious patterning is sufficient.

Very little preliminary instruction is given to the student before the reading starts. He is told not to think of reading since we are training his eyes to slide across the paper. At no time is any correction done with the student. When the instructor and student read together, his finger moves simultaneously under the spoken words in a smooth, continuous fashion at precisely the same speed and with the same flow as his verbal reading. If desired, the teacher may reach out and place his hand on the student's finger and guide it to a smooth flowing movement. It is a common habit for people not to move their fingers back rapidly enough. For the purpose of the NIM it is absolutely essential that the finger movements, voice, and words all be synchronized.

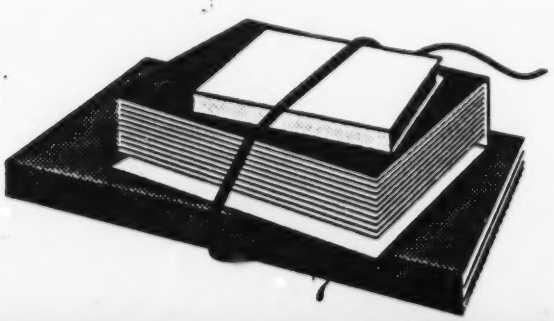
One of the most important aspects of the NIM as far as the instructor is concerned is to forget conventional approaches to the teaching of reading and think more in terms of a student being exposed to correct reading processes. It is recommended that the procedure be used for five minutes a day in a consecutive daily sessions.

At the start of echo reading, the reading materials used should be at a level slightly lower than that which the reader is able to handle adequately. By using material on which the reader has already experienced success, the teacher increases the probability that the echo method will get off to a successful beginning. Material to be used with procedure should be varied to maintain the student's interest. Newspapers, magazines, and other types of fiction and nonfiction books might be used.

Before echo reading starts, some prelimenary instructions are given to the student. The student is told to disregard accompanying pictures in the story. The teacher also indicates to the student not to be concerned with reading at all; rather, the student is asked to do as well as possible in terms of just saying the words. The student is told only to slide his or her eyes smoothly across the line of print without stopping or going back. At no time does the teacher attempt to correct any mistakes the student may make.

The fourth method is the "Cloze" procedure. This is an extension of assisted reading which may be used once beginning readers become familiar with the basic technique. This usually involves the omission of every fifth word in a passage is able to fill in many of the missing words (or their synonyms) as a result of the meaning he derives from the remainder of the text.

The Cloze procedure is ordinarily used to test the ability of readers to understand a particular selection.



HOW DO I "SET UP" GOALS?

One of the most helpful things a tutor can do in working with a student is to help that student establish and work toward realistic goals. Be sure that the goals are the student's, not yours.

For example, the tutor may feel it's important for the student to learn how to fill out job applications, but the student feels he needs to get his driver's license. If the tutor persists with teaching job applications, the student will probably leave the program because his goals aren't being met.

Long-range goals: The student may tell you about a long-range goal. As you get to know him and his abilities, you may want to help him sharpen his focus on that goal. If a student has goals that seem unrealistic, you can help by making him aware of alternatives in his field of interest which may be more within his reach.

Short-range goals: For the most part, however, you and your student will be concerned with setting and achieving short-range goals; for example, learning to write his name, writing a letter to a relative, getting ready for a driver's test, reading grocery ads. Realizing these goals will give the student the needed skills for using literacy as a tool in daily life.

Following is a guide for a goal-setting interview:

INTERVIEW

Pose the question (Samples: When you came into the Program what were you hoping to accomplish? Can you think of some times or places when you've been uncomfortable because you couldn't read or write well? What do you think you need to learn to make you feel more confident and less dependent on other people?)

General conversation follows (Sometimes students are so used to being told what they must learn, and what they must learn seems so abstract, that they may need to relate their education to their daily lives.)

Generate alternatives (Tutors can make a list of what the students want to do and what they feel is important for them to be able to do, in order to give them a sense that there are several alternatives from which to choose.)

Weigh consequences (Discussing consequences may counter the possibility of setting the student up for failure.)

Choose one to pursue (By deciding on a goal, students should begin to realize that taking action requres committment on their part.)

Identify strengths (Before some students can deal with their limitaions, they may need to be made aware of their strengths.)

Course of action (Students and tutors need to clarify their expectations of one another. Students must realize that action is expected)

WHAT ARE THE "BE" & "DON'T" RULES?

BE positive rather than negative. Place yourself in the situation. It's a lot better to be sincerely complemented than embarrassed by criticism and scolding. Drop "no" from your vocabulary. Try to teach without negative words.

BE courteous and thoughtful. This includes starting and stopping a lesson on time and being attentive to the student's conversation about self and personal problems. If you are willing to listen, you'll be amazed how much your student can teach you.

BE ready to keep a sense of humor. Make the session fun and never hesitate to admit a mistake or that you don't know something. It can be a great learning situation together.

BE patient. We all require understanding from others, and learning can be difficult when other problems in our lives are also demanding attention.

BE careful to understand that every student has a lot of experience, information and knowledge even though formal education may not have been adequate.

BE aware that you will often be the one who provides the encouragement to continue. This can often be handled by discussing the progress made and charting or writing down what was learned. This will help the student see progress toward his/her goal.

BE flexible. Never think that because you've started in one method and manner that changes cannot be made. Think about the way the student learns best. Maybe he/she needs information now that you planned on later. Maybe the student needs more of a challenge or perhaps a different approach. Remember that people learn differently. It can be helpful when the areas of writing, listening and reading are all used: It's up to you to find out what does succeed.

BE sure every lesson not only contains challenging work for the student but also contains enjoyable materials that can be successfully handled.

BE sure your student understands what he is to do. You can say too much. Say enough to be clear and then provide time for questions and a little practise with the materials before the student begins working on his own. Writing down the assignment also helps.

BE willing to have them participate, rather than just listen. Correcting their own papers can also help them learn what still needs to be worked on.

BE cognizant that you are guiding them into independent learning. Everything you do should lead to that. Be glad they tell you why something isn't working (i.e. materials, groups, etc.); that can mean they are analysing some of their own learning needs.

BE aware that review for retention is necessary. Practice is good, but not so much of it that it is just unthinking behaviour in order to finish a page. However, allow for enough practice to learn a skill.

BE alert to problems needing special attention (hearing, visual, etc.), adapt to individual learning styles. When possible use total body involvement.

BE sure to take time to make physical environment comfortable (lighting, seating, etc.) Take frequent enough breaks, and make sure the atmosphere in informal and relaxed.

DON'T repeat a word after the pupil! It sounds patronizing and irritates adults.

DON'T waste a second on a word! The first fifteen minutes are the most precious with illiterate adults. The lesson is best when it is swiftest...when it is finished before the student realizes it has more than begun.

DON'T say "no". Suggest another way of writing it or reading it.

DON'T treat your students as children. They will be embarrassed as well as irritated.

DON'T try to teach too much material at any one time. It may be frustrating.

DON'T be discouraged if the student fails to attend every session.

DON'T be disheartened or disillusioned if, after a few sessions, the "match up" did not work as anticipated.

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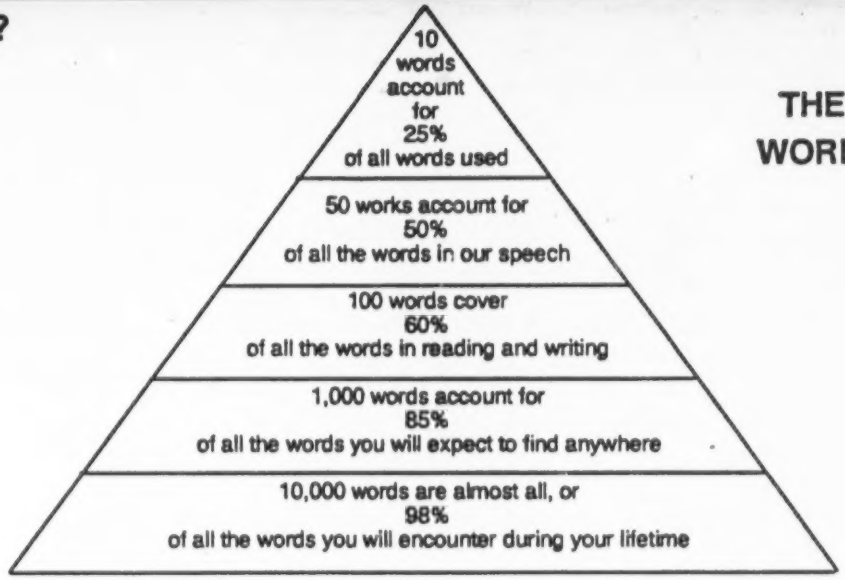
Things To Know?



THE ENGLISH WORD PYRAMID

The 10 most useful words in English are:

a and be for have in of that the to

These 50 words are used most often in writing letters:

1. I	8. in	15. have	21. at	27. all	33. had	39. he	45. would	
2. the	9. we	16. will	22. was	28. so	34. our	40. get	46. she	
3. and	10. for	17. her	23. with	29. me	35. from	41. do	47. when	
4. to	11. it	18. are	24. but	30. this	36. am	42. been	48. about	
5. a	12. that	19. not	25. on	31. very	37. one	43. letter	49. they	
6. you	13. if	20. as	26. is	32. my	38. him	44. can	50. any	
7. of	14. your							

These 50 words are found most often in what you read:

1. the	8. was	15. is	21. at	27. not	33. all	39. when	45. said	
2. and	9. that	16. with	22. on	28. be	34. one	40. up	46. would	
3. a	10. it	17. her	23. have	29. him	35. from	41. there	47. what	
4. to	11. he	18. she	24. but	30. they	36. from	42. this	48. their	
5. of	12. you	19. his	25. me	31. we	37. were	43. as	49. no	
6. I	13. for	20. as	26. my	32. ask	38. or	44. out	50. if	
7. in	14. had							

THINGS TO REMEMBER?

An adult learner might quit at anytime. They came because they wanted to.

An adult learner has many responsibilities outside the classroom.

A student may be a successful and respected member of the community.

The student may be unemployed and unaware of job opportunities.

Every adult learner is a little different from any other adult.

A student may have different goals and values from those of the volunteer.

The way the teacher feels about the student and the subject are crucial elements in any teaching-learning situation.

WHAT HELP CAN I GET?

There is no need to feel that one cannot help people learn to read without a lot of expensive material.

Use what you have. Take what you can get. Make what you need.

The adult learner knows many things. He needs to learn others in order to make his life easier:

use the telephone book
read a recipe in a cookbook
write a letter to a friend
read the job ads in the newspaper
fill out a job application form
fill out a drivers license form
decipher the menu from a favourite place
read and understand something in a magazine
read directions on a medicine bottle
read maps
read signs
read bus schedules
read letters, cards, notes
read stories to self and children
to be able to help one's child with his homework
read voting machine directions, ballots, amendments
read words required in arithmetic - figuring pay deductions, adding items bought at a store, and figuring bills

With any of these skills to learn, everyday materials will suffice. The Bow Corridor Adult Literacy Project will, however, help you in other ways; such as to provide reading materials on various reading levels, formats and interests; to provide encouragement; and to assist in training workshops for tutors.

If the adult learner is better off after a session than they were before...**YOU HAVE BEEN SUCCESSFUL!**

Learner's Motto:

I hear, I forget
I see, I remember
I do, I understand

When instructing:

1. Explain
2. Demonstrate
3. Encourage PRACTICE

If you are planning for a year, sow rice.
If you are planning for a decade, plant trees.
If you are planning for a lifetime, educate a person.

"Old Chinese Proverb"

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